

## Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Cooper, July 9, 1807, The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

**TO THOMAS COOPER J. MSS.**

Washington, July 9, '07.

Dear Sir, —Your favor of June 23 is received. I had not before learned that a life of Dr. Priestley had been published, or I should certainly have procured it; for no man living had a more affectionate respect for him. In religion, in politics, in physics, no man has rendered more service.

I had always expected that when the republicans should have put down all things under their feet, they would schismatize among themselves. I always expected, too, that whatever names the parties might bear, the real division would be into moderate & ardent republicanism. In this division there is no great evil,—not even if the minority obtain the ascendancy by the accession of federal votes to their candidate; because this gives us one shade only, instead of another, of republicanism. It is to be considered as apostasy only when they purchase the votes of federalists, with a participation in honor & power. The gross insult lately received from the English has forced the latter into a momentary coalition with the mass of republicans; but the moment we begin to act in the very line they have joined in approving, all will be wrong, and every act the reverse of what it should have been. Still, it is better to admit their coalescence, & leave to themselves their short-lived existence. Both reason & the usage of nations required we should give Gr. Britain an opportunity of disavowing & repairing the insult of their officers. It gives us at the same time an opportunity of getting home our vessels, our property, & our seamen,—the only means of carrying on the kind of war we should attempt. The only difference, I believe,

## Library of Congress

between your opinion & mine, as to the protection of commerce, is the forcing the nation to take the best road, & the letting them take the worse, if such is their will. I salute you with great esteem & respect.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson further wrote to Cooper:

“ Monticello, Sepr. 1, '07.

“ Dear Sir,—Your favor of the 9th is received, & with it the copy of Dr. Priestley's *Memoirs*, for which I return you many thanks. I shall read them with great pleasure, as I revered the character of no man living more than his. With another part of your letter I am sensibly affected. I have not here my correspondence with Govt. McKean to turn to, but I have no reason to doubt that the particular letter referred to may have been silent on the subject of your appointment as stated. The facts are these: The opinion I have ever entertained, & still entertain as strongly as ever, of your abilities & integrity, was such as made it my wish, from the moment I came to the administration, that you should be employed in some public way. On a review, however, of all circumstances, it appeared to me that the State of Pensylva had occasions for your service, which would be more acceptable than any others to yourself, because they would leave you in the enjoyment of the society of Dr. Priestley, to which your attachment was known. I therefore expressed my solicitude respecting you to Gov. McKean, whose desires to serve yourself & the public by employing you I knew to be great, & of course that you were an object of mutual concern, and I received his information of having found employment for your talents with the sincerest pleasure. But pressed as I am perpetually by an overflow of business, & adopting from necessity the rule of never answering any letter, or part of a letter, which can do without answer, in replying to his which related to other subjects, I probably said nothing on that, because my former letter had sufficiently manifested how pleasing the circumstance must be to me, and my time & practice did not permit me to be repeating things already said. This is a candid statement of that incident, and I hope you will see in it a silence accounted for on grounds far different from that of a continuance of my estimation & good wishes,

## Library of Congress

which have experienced no change. With respect to the schism among the republicans in your State, I have ever declared to both parties that I consider the general government as bound to take no part in it, and I have carefully kept both my judgment, my affections, & my conduct, clear of all bias to either. It is true, as you have heard, that a distance has taken place between Mr. Clay & myself. The cause I never could learn nor imagine. I had always known him to be an able man, & I believed him an honest one. I had looked to his coming into Congress with an entire belief that he would be cordial with the administration, and even before that I had always had him in my mind for a high important vacancy which had been from time to time expected, but is only now about to take place. I feel his loss therefore with real concern, but it is irremediable from the necessity of harmony & cordiality between those who are to manage together the public concerns. Not only his withdrawing from the usual civilities of intercourse with me, (which even the federalists with 2 or 3 exceptions keep up,) but his open hostility in Congress to the administration, leave no doubt of the state of his mind as a fact, altho' the cause be unknown. Be so good as to communicate my respects to Mr. Priestley, and to accept yourself my friendly salutations, & assurances of unaltered esteem."